THE PASSION OF BYBLIS,

Made *English.*

From *Ovid. Metam. Lib.* 9.

By Mr. *Dennis.*

B M

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THE PREFACE.

THE *Paſſion of* Byblis *ſeems to be, in the Original, not only one of* Ovid's *moſt maſterly pieces, but a Paſſion in ſome places the moſt happily touch'd of any that I have ſeen amongſt the Ancients or Moderns. The Sentiments are ſo tender and yet ſo delicate, the expreſſions ſo fit and withal ſo eaſie, with that facility which is proper to expreſs Love, and peculiar to this Charming Poet; the turns of Paſſion are ſo ſurprizing and yet ſo natural, and there ſeems to be ſomething in the very ſound of the Verſe ſo ſoft and ſo pathetick, that a man who reads the Original, muſt have no ſenſe of theſe matters if he is not tranſported with it.*

When I was deſir'd to make it Engliſh, *I read over the Original to ſome men of ſenſe, to ſee whether they would be touch'd with the ſame paſſages with which I had been mov'd ſo much. And when I ſaw that I was not miſtaken, I reſolv'd to imitate them in our native tongue, with as much addreſs as I could.*

Not that I am of the opinion that I have done juſtice to the admirable Original; but then you muſt give me leave to do ſome to my ſelf; and as I would not have

my

my faults imputed to Ovid, *ſo, ſince I have ſo many of my own to account for, I do not deſire to ſtand charg'd with his, which as his Tranſlator I was oblig'd to copy.*

I will chiefly take Notice of two, the one general, and the other particular. The general one is the Inconſiſtency that appears in the Character of Byblis. *For ſhe, who in ſome Places of her Paſſion appears ſo reluctant, ſeems too abandon'd in others; which are two or three Paſſages of her Letter (for from the beginning of the Story to the Letter, every thing ſeems to me to be juſt enough) in which ſhe ſays ſome things that are by no means conſiſtent with that Modeſty, which ſhe ought to have, as a Lady, a Virgin, and a Woman of Honor. I know very well that a Woman of Honor, when once ſhe is ſeiz'd by a great Paſſion, has more violent Deſires than the moſt abandon'd Woman can have. For abandon'd Women are conſequently weak, and it is a true Obſervation, that weak People, tho they are ſubject to Paſſions at every turn, yet are they never throughly agitated by them. But this is moſt certain, that a Woman of Honor can never break out into immodeſt Expreſſions, let her Paſſion be never ſo violent. For Immodeſty in Expreſſion muſt ſhow her profligate to the very laſt Degree, and muſt be utterly inconſiſtent with any meaſure of Honor. Now* Byblis, *who ſhows in ſome places ſo much of Honor, by ſuch ſharp Remorſe, and ſuch furious Reluctancy, ought certainly to have contented her ſelf with a bare Confeſſion of her Paſſion; and not to have behav'd her ſelf*

as

as if ſhe thought her Brother ſo very young, that he was to be inſtructed how to proceed in the Cure of it.

It may be ſaid perhaps that the Relation of the Dream, which precedes the Letter, is the moſt immodeſt thing in the Story. I will eaſily grant it, and that that Relation is in the original, the moſt alluring deſcription that can be imagin'd, and almoſt equally tranſporting with what it deſcribes. But it muſt then be conſider'd that what Byblis *ſays there, ſhe only ſpeaks to her ſelf, which amounts to no more than if ſhe but barely thought it. And there is nothing certainly in that Reflection on her Dream, but what is extreamly natural.*

The ſecond Fault in this Paſſion of Byblis, *is in the paſſage that immediately follows the return of the Meſſenger. For that which ought to be the moſt moving, is the coldeſt part of the Story. I ſpeak of the firſt thirteen Lines of the* Latin *(for all that follows ſeems to be ſufficiently warm) where* Byblis, *who can ſcarce ſpeak for the Violence of her Grief, is yet for ſpeaking in Allegory; which is nothing but an imperfect kind of Similitude.*

Now Simile in this place could not be moving, becauſe it could not be natural; it being by no means the Language of great Grief. For to be in a capacity to make a good ſimilitude, the Mind muſt have ſeveral qualifications, and two more particularly; which are utterly inconſiſtent with that Paſſion. Firſt, The Soul muſt be ſuſceptible of a great many Idea's, and the Imagination capacious of a great many Images. For the Fancy muſt run

thro, and compare a great many Objects, before it can ſtart a hint from them, which may carry with it that appearance of likeneſs which may afterward by the Judgment be improved to an exact reſemblance (not but that I know very well, that the Soul on thoſe occaſions acts with that prodigious Celerity, that it is its ſelf inſenſible of the degrees of its own motion.) Now it is the Nature of Grief to confine the Soul, and ſtraiten the Imagination, and extreamly to leſſen the number of their Objects. And indeed if the Paſſion is very violent, a man is inceſſantly thinking of the cauſe of it. For example, the unfortunate Lover has eternally before his Eyes, the Image of his Cruel Fair-one. He thinks Day and Night of her alone, he contemplates nothing but her, and if he complains of her, 'tis only after that ſimple unaffected way, by which Nature teaches man to diſcharge his Soul of ſorrow. And it is for this very reaſon that the greater part of Mr. Cowley's amorous Verſes are univerſally exploded by men of ſence, at the ſame time that they confeſs, that ſeveral of his Miſcellaneous Writings, his Pindaric Odes, and his Divine Hymn to Light, will juſtly deſerve the Admiration of our lateſt Poſterity. For in moſt of thoſe amorous Verſes, there appears thro the diſguiſe of an affected Paſſion, a Gayety of Heart, a Wantonneſs of Wit, and a Soul that's at Liberty to roam about the Univerſe, and return home laden with rich, but far fetch'd Conceits. As merry in this reſpect as the Madrigals of our amorous Rakehells; who languiſh in Simile, whilſt they thrive in Carkaſs; and who eating their Half-

Crowns every day thrice, decay and dye by Metaphor. In ſhort, no ſort of imagery ever can be the Langnage of Grief. If a man complains in Simile, I either laugh or ſleep. For this is plain, that if a man's Affliction will ſuffer him to divert his mind by one Simile, he may as well do it by twenty, and ſo on to the end of the Chapter. If ſuch a man therefore is miſerable, it is becauſe he is reſolved he will be ſo. Now a man muſt have an extraordinary ſtock of good Nature, who can pity a Blockhead, who is a Wretch by choice.

But ſecondly, For the Mind to be capable of making Similitudes, it is neceſſary it ſhould be ſerene (unleſs it be tranſported with that noble Enthuſiaſm, which delights, illuminates, and exalts the Soul, at the very ſame time it diſturbs it.) For without Serenity a man can never have Penetration enough to diſcern the Nature of things, which Penetration is abſolutely neceſſary for the making a juſt Similitude; And it is upon this very account that Ariſtotle *ſays in his Rhetorick, that to be happy in making Similitudes, it is abſolutely neceſſary to be a man of good Sence.*

Some of my Friends, to whom I have recited in Converſation, the ſubſtance of what I have here repeated in Writing, have adviſed me to leave out this unſeaſonable Similitude, eſpecially ſince I have made ſo bold with Ovid, *as to inſert here and there a Thought of my own. For it is my Lord* Roſcommon's *opinion, that it is much ſafer to leave out than add. Tho no man pays more deference*

to

to his Judgment than I do, I cannot be of his mind in this. For tho I am not ignorant that a ſcurvy preſent, is but a more civil Affront; I cannot but believe it to be leſs injurious than a Robbery. And if any man ſhould be taught, ipſo facto, ſtripping another upon the Road, it would be but an impudent excuſe in him, to alledge that the Cloaths but ill became their Owner. All that I could do here, was by giving this paſſage another turn, to make that appear in the Copy to be ſpoken in a ſhort, but downright Fury, whoſe fault it was in the original to ſeem to be ſpoken with too much Conſiderateneſs, and too much Coolneſs of Temper.

The Author of the Satyrs upon the Jeſuits, who has tranſlated this Paſſion of Byblis, *has not meddled with the Cataſtrophe. Now the Cataſtrophe was abſolutely neceſſary, that the Story at ending might make a deeper impreſſion: I have therefore contracted it in the laſt five Lines, but at the ſame time I have alter'd it. For to make it moving it was neceſſary to make it credible.*

The Transformation of Byblis *might do very well in the time of* Auguſtus Cæſar. *For at that time thoſe Tranſformations were a part of the* Roman *Religion, and the Poets may be ſaid to be the Secular Prieſts, who tranſmitted its myſteries to the People. But thoſe tranſubſtantiating Doctrines, which were taught in thoſe times by that Harmonious Clergy of the credulous Church of old* Rome, *would look as abſurdly to us as the Chimerical Metamorphoſis, which is pretended to be acted at the very time it is ſung in our modern* Roman *Churches.* I muſt

I muſt beg pardon for the Liberty which I have taken in the numbers, which is ſo great that it may well be entitled Licenſe. But then the Reader will have the greater Variety, and if thoſe Numbers are not harmonious, it is not for want of care about them. I have particularly taken care to be exact in the Rimes, in which the former Tranſlators of this paſſage have been very defective. I am not ſo miſerably miſtaken, as to think riming eſſential to our Engliſh *Poetry. I am far better acquainted with* Milton, *than that comes too. Who without the aſſiſtance of Rime, is one of the moſt ſublime of our* Engliſh *Poets. Nay, there is ſomething ſo tranſcendently ſublime in his firſt, ſecond, and ſixth Books, that were the Language as pure as the Images are vaſt and daring, I do not believe it could be equall'd, no, not in all antiquity. But tho I know that Riming is not abſolutely neceſſary to our Verſification, yet I am for having a man do throughly what he has once pretended to do. Writing in blank Verſe looks like a contempt of Rime, and a generous diſdain of a barbarous Cuſtom; but Writing in ſuch Rimes as a Boy may laugh at, at* Crambo, *looks at the beſt like a fruitleſs attempt, and an impotent Affectation.*

My Lord Roſcommon *who writ in blank Verſe with ſo much ſucceſs, yet was nicely exact in Riming, whenever he pretended to rime. And in the very eſſay upon tranſlated Verſe in which he exclaims againſt Rime, I*

 defy

defy any man to ſhow me half a dozen couplets which do not rime exactly.

In ſhort, if riming is ever neceſſary in ſo ſtrong and maſculine a Language as ours, it muſt be on theſe tender occaſions. For tho I have heard ſeveral maintain, that a thing may be expreſſed as nobly and vigorouſly in blank Verſe, as in Rime; I never yet heard any one pretend that it might be expreſſed as ſoftly. But granting it could, it is yet very certain, that a thing muſt be much more tender in perfect Rimes, than imperfect. For where the Reader expects a Rime, there jarring ſounds muſt render that harſh, which agreeing ſounds would render eaſie. But then it is neceſſary that the Rimes ſhould be unconſtrained, and no word us'd upon their account in the place where it is not proper.

But ſince I have mention'd Mr Oldham's *performance, in this Tranſlation, I think fit to add further, that I have been told by ſome, that a great many will never forgive me the attempting it after him. I deſire them to conſider, that the ſame* Mr. Oldham *undertook* Horace's *Art of Poetry after my Lord* Roſcommon. *Now my Lord* Roſcommon *was Politeneſs it ſelf. Never man thought more clearly, more truly, more juſtly than he did; never man expreſs'd himſelf more ſtily and more becomingly. In every thing that he writ, his Language was as perfect as his Conceptions were often ſublime. On every thing that came from him, he has ſtamp'd the character not only of an exalted*

Wit,

Wit, but of a man of a high Condition, and of a courtly Mind.

If I ſhould affirm that Mr. Oldham *had by no means all the good Qualities which are conſpicuous in my Lord* Roſcommon, *, who is there that muſt not aſſent to it? If then I am guilty of preſumption in attempting what* Mr. Oldham *undertook before me, I hope I may be excuſed by his own example. But if ſome People yet can reſolve to be angry, I muſt beg them to conſider for what. Is it becauſe I have a deſire to pleaſe them? That methinks is unnatural. Tho I ſhould own, I have an Ambition to give them more Delight than the fore-mentioned Gentleman has done before me, I cannot ſee any thing in ſuch a Confeſſion which can reaſonably diſoblige them. Such an knowledgment ought rather to gain me their Favor, or at leaſt to conquer their Prejudice, eſpecially ſince 'tis the intereſt of every Reader to be as candid as the Caſe will let him be. 'Tis true, a man of ſence can never be ſatisfi'd with a ſilly thing. But a peeviſh, unreaſonable Caviller, will never be ſatisfied with any thing. Little conſidering that by a falſe delicacy he makes himſelf paſs thoſe moments ſcurvily, which another perhaps has done his part to make him paſs agreeably.*

Beſides, if I ſhould ſucceed here, ev'n beyond my wiſh, I ſhould be very far upon that ſcore, from arrogating Preheminence over any man. The following Tranſlation is a trifle, and can never be concluſive of any ſuch thing. To ſucceed in

it

it required neither Force nor Genius, but only a Tenderness of Soul (which Mr. Oldham's *masculine temper disdain'd) and an extraordinary propensity to that humane frailty, Compassion; and a certain Felicity which usually accompanies the dictates of the softer Passions. To conclude, I leave it to any one to consider whether a Satyrist, as Mr.* Oldham *was, at the very time that, inspir'd by a generous rage, he had assum'd a resolution of exposing the Follies, and lashing the Vices of the Age, could be fitly dispos'd to excite Compassion; by setting before our eyes an unfortunate Lady, whose Love was at once her Folly and her Crime.*

THE

THE
Paſſion of Byblis.

BRight Nymphs, the Objects of Mankind's Deſires,
From *Byblis* learn t' avoid inceſtuous Fires:
She *Caunus* lov'd, with tenderneſs above
The cold endearments of a Siſters Love.
At firſt ſhe knew it not, unhappy Maid!
To impious Flames by Piety betraid.
She frequently would kiſs the beauteous Boy,
And thought her Duty what ſhe found her Joy.
Her Love for Duty ſhe miſtook with eaſe,
Yet was ſurpriz'd that Duty thus ſhould pleaſe.
Her twining Arms his lovely Neck would claſp,
Fierce was each Kiſs, and furious ev'ry Graſp.

Inſenſibly her Paſſion gathers force,
And has to Female Stratagems recourſe.
About to viſit *Caunus*, e're She goes,
Her skilful Maids her wanton Dreſs compoſe;
And all the Ornaments of Art prepare
To ſet forth all that Heav'n has giv'n the Fair,
Ten thouſand *Cupids* in her Eyes, & Graces in her Air.
Then in her Glaſs ſh' explores what pow'r there lyes,
In a Majeſtic eaſie Meen, and lovely glancing Eyes;
Practices Smiles, ſuch by which Souls are caught,
Great, God-like Spirits to dependance brought,
The Magic by the great Enchantreſs Nature taught.
She envies ev'ry Face that's form'd to pleaſe,
And wonders why, not knowing her diſeaſe.
So men in Hecticks, waſting for their Urn,
Hourly conſume, yet feel not that they burn.
Pent in her inmoſt Breaſt the raging Fire,
Had not as yet flam'd up to high deſire;
Her Brother, now her Lord, her Dear ſhe names,
And kindred, Love thus tenderly diſclaims.

Her

Her Paſſion now ſhe doubts, yet does controul,
No guilty thought yet ſtain'd her waking Soul,
On it, with Night, the black pollution ſtole.
A pleaſing Dream t' her ſide her Brother brings,
With panting Breaſts ſhe murmuring to him clings:
Strait in her Face offended Nature flies,
And Bluſhes dawn around her darkned Eyes.
She wakes, but huſh'd & rapt in fearful wonder lies.
Her Dream at once can charm her and torment,
The aery Omen boads ſome dire Event.
A long time mute ſhe all her Soul ſurveys,
And then its grief in theſe wild words diſplays.
What means the Viſion of the guilty Night?
Ah Wretch! What Horror mix'd with what delight!
Why did that lovely ſhape break in upon my ſight?
'Tis true, ev'n Envy no defect can find,
Or in the Beauties of his Face, or Graces of his mind.
Ev'n Envy can contented on him gaze,
By liking ſullenly it ſelf amaze,
And learn to ſpeak a foreign Language, Praiſe.

The

The Gods have made him fit to be deſir'd,
Have made him by themſelves to be admir'd.
But oh! a Brother's once endearing name
Is now the Foe that's fatal to my Flame.
Yet whilſt awake I can continue chaſte,
May ev'ry golden Dream be like the laſt.
For what vain Fop the ſport of ſuch a Bed
Can idly blab? or what dull Libel ſpread?
Honor's ſecure, whilſt Pleaſure I perſue,
And this falſe bliſs is ſurely worth the true.
Bright Queen of Love, and wing'd delicious Boy,
Soft, ſweet, and ſwift as was my flitting Joy;
Into what Heav'n of Rapture was I caught!
Too powerful joys for words, too vaſt for thought!
By dying Sighs, and broken Murmurs, beſt
When abſent mourn'd, and when enjoy'd expreſt.
The Viſion did ſuch quick delight diſpenſe,
I ſometimes doubt if fancy were not ſenſe.
I felt, perfectly felt, what I adore,
The God-like touch gave bliſs unknown before.

Th' immortal Pleaſure ran thro all my Frame,
Thro all my Bones, and inmoſt Marrow came,
That melted and ran pouring down before th' im-
[petuous Flame.

For ever ſhall the charming Memory laſt
Of Tranſports, which, alas! *too* quickly paſt!
For the Malignant Goddeſs of the Night,
Envying my Bliſs, urg'd on her Head-long Flight.
O! could we but diſſolve great Nature's tye,
How well we link'd in ſtricter Bonds might lye?
Who could be fitlier pair'd than thou and I?
As thou no Maid can'ſt e're tranſport like me,
Who ſuch high Happineſs can give to thee?
Ah *Caunus!* that we ev'ry Night like this
Might lie entranc'd in vaſt exſtatic Bliſs!
Curſt be the time when my great Father did
The Deed for me, which I'm with thee forbid;
Would I had been (deriv'd from ſome poor Swain)
But the moſt loveſome ſhe upon the Plain:
What Nature muſt deny me now, the God might
[then obtain.

Ah! who muſt raviſh'd in thy' Embraces be?
Exalted above Goddeſſes is ſhe,
Faireſt of men! who muſt b' embrac'd by thee.
I never can that full content enjoy,
Thou Brother! Thou! too dear, too charming Boy!
By being thus far mine, doſt all my Hopes deſtroy.
But what import, or what are then my Dreams,
The fond Reſults of Hypochondriack Steams?
Or do they as divinely' inſpir'd preſage?
The Gods forbid! The Gods repel this Rage!
The Gods this Fever of my Soul aſſuage!
Yet *Saturn* of his Siſter made his Bride,
And in inceſtuous Fires the Thunderer fry'd.
But Gods have high Prerogatives, and they
Who rule the World with Arbitrary Sway
Are unconfin'd by Laws which we obey.
Laws by thoſe happy Beings are diſdain'd,
Who would b' imperfect if like us reſtrain'd.
Then from thy Breaſt expel theſe impious Fires,
Tho, with thy Love's, Life's genial Flame expires!

Yes:

Yes : if all other Methods fail, I'le dye,
Caunus will kiſs me as I panting lye;
To his ſweet Lips, as to its Heav'n, my parting Soul
will fly:
Yet ſay thou ſhouldſt indulge thy wild Deſire,
T' accompliſh it does his Content require.
What you thus wiſh, and your chief good eſteem,
To him may black and execrable ſeem.
Yet formerly, to quench a Sifters Flame,
Macareus Conſcience did contemn, and Fame.
Ah Wretch! haſt thou reſolv'd upon the Deed?
Whence can theſe Thoughts? theſe curſt Remarks
proceed,
Oh whither am I driv'n! O whither toſt!
How in tempeſtuous Thought my Reaſon's loſt?
Hence ye obſcene Flames, ye Furies hence, go dwell
In your own native Soil, profoundeſt Hell.
Love the ſweet Youth, but love without a Fault,
And love him as the kindeſt Sifter ought.

But yet did he thus rave for *Byblis*, I
Could ne're reſolve to ſee my *Caunus* dye.
I ſhould Compaſſion have of him; I ſure
Should him, by humoring his frenzy, cure.
Well! if thou ſhouldſt that eaſy Creature be,
Can'ſt thou abandon'd be to that degree,
As to ſpeak firſt? Can'ſt thou for Favor ſue?
Thou art a Virgin, great, and modeſt too.
Ah! we are modeſt, but becauſe we're frail,
O're whom does not Almighty Love prevail?

But yet th' expedient which I mean to try,
Shall both with Baſhfulneſs and Love comply.
A Letter ſhall my troubled thoughts convey,
And by its black Contents my ſecret Fires betray.

This Reſolution fix'd her doubtful Mind,
Then, on her Arm, her lovely Head reclin'd.
Yes, he ſhall know what torturing pains I feel,
I can no more my deſperate caſe conceal,
Such Frenzy ſoon would its own cauſe reveal.

O what

O what infernal flame! What fury's this!
Gods! from what height I plunge, to what abyſs!
Eternally farewell, O Honor, Vertue, Bliſs!
Then with ſad Looks and trembling Hand ſh' indites,
Begins and doubts, nay damns what ſcarce ſhe writes.
Yet to what now ſhe blames, ſhe ſtrait returns;
With Rapture now ſh' invents, what now ſhe burns.
Then what this moment to the Flames ſhe dooms,
The next ſhe with a whirl of thought reſumes.
Inceſſantly ſhe turns her fev'riſh mind,
Too diſcompos'd ev'n her own will to find.

Your Siſter, (*Caunus!*) thus at firſt ſhe wrote,
Ah no! his Lover! Siſter thus I blot.
Your Lover ſends that health ſhe wants, for I
Unleſs you give me health, muſt ſurely dye.
As for my Name, O let it not be told,
Till promis'd happineſs makes *Byblis* bold!
'Tis ſhe who for you hourly waſtes away,
Heeding you might have ſeen this ev'ry day.

Love ev'ry day ſtill languiſh'd in my look,
Which colour, health, and ſprightly joy forſook.
How often, when no cauſe of Grief was known,
Have I ſome inward, deep diſturbance ſhown?
How oft did Tears ſteal from my mournful Eyes,
And in my Breaſts convulſive heavings riſe?
Then on a ſudden ſadneſs turn'd to rage,
And my wild arms did your ſoft limbs engage.
As the luxuriant tendrils of the Vine
Around the Elm with wanton windings twine,
My ſpringing arms flew round and lock'd in thine.
And when thy Lips to mine they fiercely brought,
My burning Lips at thine for moiſture ſought.
No Siſters faint ſalute! no taſteleſs Kiſs!
But piercing like a Dove's, and murmuring at its bliſs.
But yet tho deep, ah deep! the flaming Dart,
Piercing my burning breaſt, transfix'd my heart,
Alarm'd, like wretches by nocturnal Fire,
And trembling at the terrible deſire,

Long

Long time I ſtrove its fury to aſſwage,
And long time ſtrugling Virtue ſtopt its rage.
This Truth, O all ye Chaſter Powers atteſt!
Ye ſaw the fearful conflict in my Breaſt,
When Honour, Piety, Remorſe and Shame,
My very vitals tore t' expel my flame.
In miſery grown obſtinate, I bore
What never tender Virgin did before.
When what I ſuffer'd other Maids but hear,
'Twill wound their gentle hearts, and force a tear.
Retreating, long I fought th' unequal field,
But now I turn to conquering Love, and yield.
I here my ſelf his Slave and yours confeſs,
And cry for mercy in extream diſtreſs;
But you alone can my ſad ſtate redreſs.
Her Life who loves you hangs upon your breath,
And upon that, alas! depends her Death.
I love to that degree, that neither Gods nor Fate,
If you pronounce my Doom, have pow'r t' extend
[my date.

My

My Life or Death determine by your Voice,
Can you deliberate in ſuch a choice?
Can you be proof againſt ſuch Words as theſe?
Theſe from the perſon whom you hate might pleaſe.
Me Nature has begun to make your Friend,
What Nature has begun a God muſt end.
Unſatisfi'd, unbleſt by Nature's tye,
All Night I languiſh, and all Day I dye,
Till riveted by Love to your dear Breaſt I lye.
Let Dotards Slaves to muſty Morals be,
Auſterities and Impotence agree.
But in us two hot Youth and fierce Deſire
To ſublime Raptures furiouſly aſpire,
And into right and wrong want leiſure to enquire.
Thus young we yet may Innocence pretend,
Or grant we know we Nature's bounds tranſcend
By great examples of our Gods we glorioufly offend.
All Letts t' Enjoyment are remov'd by Fate,
Unleſs it be (forbid it Heav'n!) thy Hate.

No

No rigorous Parents interpoſe to break
The aſſignations we may hourly make.
Our frequent meetings need no ſcandal fear,
For intimacy's honourable here.
What Spy can our delicious thefts detect?
Who can diſcloſe what none can e're ſuſpect?
Should ſome bold cenſurer our conduct blame,
A Brother's and a Siſter's awful name,
Would anſw'ring ſtop the ſawcy mouths of Fame.
We' in publick kiſs, embrace, and whiſp'ring walk,
And hand in hand ſoft melting things we talk.
When two like us in cloſe embraces kiſs,
Does there not ſomething uſe to follow this?
Upon that ſomething (ah how very ſmall!)
Depends my happineſs, my life, my all.

Pity a wretch, who thus much dares expreſs,
Who wrack'd by mortal pangs, dares Love confeſs.
Which, whilſt they all my nobler powers controul,
Tear forth the ſecret of my tortur'd Soul.

If Nature's Law ſeems broke whilſt this you read,
Think that for happineſs, for life I plead,
Here Nature's ſelf her Law muſt ſuperſede.
You ſurely kill me if unkind you prove,
O barbarous return of boundleſs Love!
Think how upon my Sepulchre 'twill ſound,
How ev'ry Heart thro ev'ry Ear 'twill wound;
Here *Byblis* lyes, a tender, wretched Maid,
By *Caunus* for her Love with Death repaid.

Thus all on fire her working Mind indites,
Till ev'ry Page and Margent's full, ſhe writes.
Then ſhe her Crime folds up, and ſhrowds from Sight,
And ſealing, ſhuts the monſtrous birth from Light.
Now ſhe an old Domeſtic calls by Name,
With accents more than half ſuppreſt by Shame.
Thou art my very faithful Servant ſtill,
With ſecreſy and ſpeed perform my Will.
Of this important Letter, here, take care,
On it my Life and Fame depend, go bear ——

Here

Here grief and conſcious ſhame her accents ſmother,
Then after a long ſad pauſe——
Go bear it to, ſaid ſhe, Ah Gods! —my Brother.

Now as ſhe from the fatal Writing parts,
It falls; ſhe trembling at the Omen, ſtarts:
Yet fondly to deſtruction on ſhe goes.
Her truſty Slave a fit conjuncture choſe;
To *Caunus* his apartment he repairs,
And to the noble Youth the dreadful Secret bears.

Rage, horror, wonder, ſeiz'd him at the view,
From him the Letter furiouſly he threw.
Storming, his Hand upon his Sword he lays,
And to the trembling Meſſenger he ſays:
Flagitious Pander to inceſtuous Fires!
Slave! thou ſhouldſt dye, as thy bold crime requires,
Did not the honour of my houſe and name
Tell me, thy blood, if ſpilt, would ſpread our ſhame.

But quickly from my juſt reſentment fly,
Or that ſhall yet prevail, and thou ſhalt dye.
This to the Slave, with a ſtern brow he ſaid;
He pale at inſtant death, and ſhudd'ring, fled,
And with the mortal news ſtruck dying *Byblis* dead.

An Icy damp, cold as the dart of Death,
Thrill'd thro her throbbing breaſt & ſtop'd her breath:
Life's flames o're-pow'r'd in ev'ry other part,
But ſtill Love's fire maintains it at her heart.

As ſoon as her returning Spirits gave
Juſt ſtrength to mourn, and ſence enough to rave,
With hollow voice the trembling air ſhe wounds,
And ſoftly ſighs out theſe afflicting ſounds.

Repell'd! diſdain'd! nay, loath'd! could worſe befal,
Thy conduct and thy crime deſerve it all.
For why haſt thou, O wretch, to madneſs bold!
Thus raſhly thy prodigious Secret told?

What

What Fool would Happineſs, Life, Fame commit
To a fond Letter in confuſion writ?
Thou ſhouldſt in doubtful terms have firſt addreſt,
Th' uncertain depths have ſounded of his Breaſt.
Fool! thus preſumptuouſly to leave the Shore,
And not the Winds, nor the new Seas explore.
Thoſe Winds now roar, and the mad Seas run high,
And all things round look hideous to my Eye,
A raging Main! and black tempeſtuous Sky!
To Death I thro ſurrounding Horrors go,
Now, now the Billows on the Rocks the bounding
[Veſſel throw!
And yet by Omens certain and divine,
Thou wer't forbid to urge thy dire deſign.
In the pronouncing how the Meſſage hung,
Foreboding Ruine on thy fault'ring Tongue!
Thy Genius whiſper'd thee within, beware!
And from without ſome God cry'd out, forbear!
Thy Letter by immortal impulſe fell,
As thou deliver'd'ſt it (thou ſawſt it well)

The Paper, mov'd by ſome eternal mind,
Th' accurſed Errant by its flight declin'd:
O had thy Hope together fled! but Fate thy Doom deſign'd.

Thy purpoſe elſe, by portents thus deterr'd,
Thou hadſt giv'n o're: giv'n o're? ah no! deferr'd.
Who knows? upon ſome happier day perhaps thou [hadſt been heard.

And yet would any one but thou have ſent,
When all thus lay at ſtake? thou ſhouldſt have went.
He from thy Lines not half thy ſenſe could know,
Thy Eyes thy Love in all its Fury ſhow.
H' had ſeen thoſe dying Eyes, and ſuch a Look,
As might a fell Barbarians Soul have ſhook.
H' had heard the tender'ſt things, and in a tone
That's fit t' expreſs a dying Lovers moan.
Round his reluctant Neck my Arms I'd flung,
And to his Breaſt with ſtrange Convulſions clung.
Then proſtrate at his Feet h' had ſeen me lying,
There groaning, trembling, fainting, ſwooning, dying.

If

If one of theſe to move his Heart had fail'd,
His barbarous Heart, they all had ſure prevail'd.

Perhaps thy Servant caus'd thy ill ſucceſs,
By haſty management without addreſs.
He might abſurdly chuſe ſome buſy hour,
Too rude and harſh for Love's ſoft tender pow'r.
Therefore he fail'd the noble Youth to move,
Can one who has thoſe Eyes inexorable prove?
His Breaſt's of no impenetrable mold,
No Adamantine Bars his Heart infold.
He did not from a Tygreſs ſpring, no he
Sprung from the ſame ſoft yielding Nymph with me.
Come, he muſt yet be mine, I'le try once more,
Once more? a thouſand times, I'le ne're give o're.

True, I could wiſh, if Actions once begun,
By empty wiſhes were to be undone.
Then could I wiſh, I never had indulg'd
This luckleſs Love, at leaſt had ne're divulg'd.

But ſince what's paſt ev'n Fate can ne're recall,
now muſt through, whate're extreams befall.
He'll think if I thus lightly could diſclaim,
I lightly entertain'd th' inceſtuous Flame.
Perhaps he may ſuſpect ſome cloſe deſign,
His Int'reſt with his Fame to undermine.
That ſpecious baits were for his Virtue laid,
To be to public Infamy betray'd.
He'll fancy this ſome common, baſe deſire,
Whereas the God, the God theſe Ravings does inſpire.
His wrathful breath incenſes thus my Blood,
Drives on the liquid Fire, and rowls the ſtormy Flood.

Shouldſt thou deſiſt? the horrid crime's conceiv'd,
And Innocence can never, never be retriev'd.
Thy Guilt has reach'd a very dreadful height,
What? ſo much Guilt? and for it no Delight?
Advancing, little can thy Guilt inhaunce,
And to the vaſt Delight of Gods it *Byblis* may advance.

Thus

Thus as some ease upon her Bed she sought,
Her lab'ring Fancy to Distraction wrought,
Tossing, she fluctuates in tempestuous thought.
Her sickly mind oppos'd designs revolves,
What it repents of to repeat resolves.
Her Brother obstinately she persues,
Often repuls'd, she oft th' Assault renews.
Her Flame, that found these stops, more fiercely burn'd,
But at the last to meer Distraction turn'd.

Poor, hapless Beauty! once thy conqu'ring Eyes
Could boast the noblest *Carian* Hearts their Prize,
Now mad she lies in solitude, on *Caunus* raves and dyes.

Annotations

v. 5. WOuld I had been (deriv'd from some poor [Swain,) &c.

The Latin *is,* Tu me vellem generosior esses.
Mr. Oldham *renders it thus.*

Would thou wert noble, I more meanly born

She makes her give this reason for her Wish, vid.

Then guiltless I'd despair'd, and suffer'd Scorn.

Whereas the reason that I make her give is just opposite to it, vid. *Then I might guiltless have enjoyed my Cautus.* Ovid *expresses no reason, but implies one; for there is something Pindarical in the sense of this passage, and the Connexion is left to be made by the Reader, as we shall find anon. In the mean while let us see, whither Mr.* Oldham's *reason or mine is that of* Ovid. *To discover which let us consider, which is most agreeable to good sense, and the nature of her Passion, and most suitable to the Design of the Poet. It does not seem to me to be consistent with good sense, to make* Byblis, *who so vehemently desir'd to enjoy her Brother, and who at the same time saw the impossibility of it, and felt the Plague of Despair, wish that she had been of a more obscure Descent, rather than of her Brother's illustrious Stock; only that with the same vehement desire she might have the same Despair. Nor does this seem to be consistent with the Nature of Love. For they who are throughly seiz'd with that Passion, place all their Felicity in the beloved Object, and even in Despair most ardently desire Possession. And such can no more wish to be in a Condition of Life, that might render them incapable of enjoying what they love, than any man or woman can truly wish to be miserable. It had*

had been therefore more consonant to good sense, and the Nature of the Passion, to make her speak thus. Had my Birth been more lowly, and I had been tormented with the same desire, tho there had been then an improbability of satisfying it, yet considering what a Leveller Love is, there had not been then, as there is now, an absolute impossibility of innocently enjoying my *Caunus*. *To discover if this be not* Ovid's *sense, I think fit with this passage to cite what immediately precedes and follows.*

O ego, si liceat mutato nomine jungi,
Quam bene, *Caune*, tuo poteram nurus esse Parenti!
Quam bene, *Caune*, meo poteras gener esse Parenti!
Omnia Dii facerent essent communia nobis
Præter avos, tu me vellem generosior esses,
Nescio quam facies igitur pulcherrime matrem!

That is to say, Could we but dissolve the bonds of Nature, how well we might be joyn'd in stricter! I wish that having every thing else in common, we had at least a different Lineage; would I had been inferior to *Caunus*, rather than thus have been equal to him. But alas! this is but a vain wish, and therefore another must be the happy she who must possess all that I languish for. *I believe this will be allowed to be a just explication of* Ovid's *sense. For the last verse by the word* igitur *must necessarily be an inference, from something expressed or implied in the last but one. Now that which is implied can be nothing but this.* If you had been of a different Parentage, tho you had been more nobly descended, yet there had then been a possibility (such is the force of Love) of my being blest in innocently possessing you; which possibility now is destroyed by Relation. Therefore another, *&c. Besides, if we do but consider, that every thing that precedes and follows* Byblis's *wish, that her Brother had been more nobly descended, appears plainly to be spoke out of a furious desire of enjoying him; we need make no doubt but that very wish too proceeds from the same desire.*

To

P. 7. To his sweet Lips as to its Heaven, &c.

This is not the thought of Ovid. *Mr.* Sands *has touch'd upon it, but very faintly. Mr.* Oldham *has kept wide of it. But because no thought that can ever be substituted, can make amends for that of the original, I think my self obliged to do* Ovid *that Justice as to insert it here. The* Latin *is thus then.*

Aut nostro vetitus de corde fugabitur ardor,
Aut hoc si nequeo peream precor ipsa, toroq;
Mortua componar: positæq; det oscula frater.

That is to say, Either I will expel this incestuous Love from my Breast, or dye in the attempt, and be laid out on the mournful Hearse. *One would have thought that there had been an end of her and her Passion, when by an admirable and surprizing return of it, she immediately adds,* positæq; det oscula frater. Let my Brother embrace me as I lie senseless there. *So that here she seems to make provision for her Passion, against a time when it can be no more, to anticipate the satisfaction of her Brother's embracing her in the moment in which she cannot be sensible of it, and, by imagination in the same sentence, to extend her love beyond that death by which she propounds to end it. This is indeed livelily to paint the extream disorder of a violent and irregular Passion. But what Hand must give us a copy of so divine an original? Who must not despair of imitating successfully the wonderful celerity of this incomparable turn?*

P. 11. All Lets t' enjoyment, &c. *The* Latin *is,*

Nec nos aut durus Pater aut reverentia famæ
Aut Timor impedict.

Mr. Oldham *has render'd it thus.*

Let

Let neither Awe of Fathers Frowns, nor Shame
For ought that can be told by blabbing Fame,
Nor any Ghaſtlier fantom Fear can frame
Frighten or ſtop us, in the way to Bliſs.

So that he makes Byblis *ſtart ſeveral difficulties enough to frighten her Brother, if he were inclin'd to complyance, and then exhorts him to go on in ſpight of them. Whereas the deſign of* Ovid, *is to make her anſwer ſuch Objections as may probably be made by* Caunus. *The things that can chiefly be objected in ſuch a caſe are two,* viz. *The Rigor of Parents, and Apprehenſion of Infamy. Now neither of theſe have reaſon to frighten us. For ſays ſhe,* Dulcia fraterno ſub nomine furta tegemus. *That is, we ſhall conceal our inceſtuous Love under the diſguiſe of fraternal Affection, and tho we appear never ſo fond to our Parents, and the reſt of the World, they will be rather apt to extol our Piety, than to arraign our Inceſt. But this Verſe,* Dulcia, &c. *which* Byblis *ſpeaks as a reaſon for what preceded it, looks in Mr.* Oldham *like the Introduction of a new Propoſition.*

P. 19 Come he muſt yet be mine, *&c. The* Latin *is.*

Vincetur: repetendus erit, nec tædia cœpti
Ulla mei capiam, dum ſpiritus iſte manebit.

Mr. Oldham *has rendered it thus.*

Alive I'll pray, till Breath in Prayers be loſt,
And after come a kind beſeeching Ghoſt.

Where he puſhes Ovid's *thought a little too far, and indeed beyond the bounds of good ſenſe. 'Tis true, I have met with ſome Gentlemen, who admire this paſſage very much, as ſomething forſooth*

very ſoft, But like will to like, ſays the Proverb. For indeed thoſe Gentlemen may be ſaid to be ſoft with a vengeance, I would fain ask them one queſtion. For what ſhould this poor Ghoſt come a begging? For the Charity of the Fleſh? That would be very pleaſant. And yet the Charity of the Fleſh is certainly the buſineſs in queſtion.

P. 20. He'll think if thus, *&c. The* Latin *is.*

Vel quia deſierim, leviter voluiſſe videbor.

Which Mr. Oldham *renders thus.*

Should I deſiſt, 'twill be believ'd that I,
By ſlightly asking, taught him to deny.

I wonder that a man of Mr. Oldham's *Senſe and Learning ſhould miſtake* leviter voluiſſe *for ſlightly asking. By which miſtake he has run himſelf upon two abſurdities. For firſt he puts a ſentiment into the mouth of* Byblis, *that is altogether baſe, and unworthy of a Woman of Honor, as if ſhe were afraid of not being thought impudent enough, or of not being thought in good earneſt. Secondly, he makes her bring that as an argument for perſiſting in her deſign, which is directly concluſive of the contrary. For what ſhe ſays, in Proſe, and in plain* Engliſh, *is this.* If I ſhould now conquer this Paſſion, and grow once more the vertuous *Byblis*, I am afraid the World, who may come to know what a civil Requeſt I made to my Brother, and afterwards took the very firſt Denial, I am afraid this ill-natur'd World will believe that I was but in jeſt. *Truly a very pleaſant and very reaſonable Fear. But what does ſhe call ſlightly asking? The ſending ſuch a Letter as hers? For my part I know but one way ſhe had to put the buſineſs more home to him. This cannot be the ſenſe of* Ovid. *For tho.* Ovid *is not the juſteſt man in the World in his thinking, (for juſtneſs is not his Talent) yet he ſeldom thinks ſo prepoſterouſly, nor could Mr.* Oldham *have done it, if he had not writ this in a hurry. By* leviter voluiſſe *then is meant not ſlightly*

ſlightly to have asked, but lightly to have inclin'd my Will; and then the meaning has not only ſomething very ſenſible in it, but very extraordinary and very noble. For thus Byblis *is made to aſſert her Honor, by her very perſiſting in a moſt execrable crime, for now the ſenſe runs thus.* If I ſhould now upon this firſt Repulſe give over, then men will reaſonably conclude, that ſince it was in my power ſo ſoon to deſiſt, it was in my power not to have given way to this Paſſion at firſt; and that ſhe who could ſo eaſily ſtop its progreſs, might much more eaſily have prevented its very beginning; and conſequently the advances which I have made to my Brother, will be imputed rather to my natural inclination to ſuch horrible Wickedneſs, or ſome ſtrange and baſe infirmity in me, than the force of a Paſſion inflicted by an offended God. But if after having ſhown ſo much Remorſe, and ſo much Reluctancy, I ſtill perſiſt, notwithſtanding that Remorſe, notwithſtanding that Reluctancy, nay notwithſtanding Deſpair; why then my Brother and all the World muſt acknowledge that *Byblis* is not to blame; but that ſince ſhe does what doing ſhe diſapproves, and ſollicits a Vice, the very thought of which ſtrikes her with Horror, it is demonſtrably evident that her Paſſion is ſupernatural; and is not actuated by her own Will, but ſome more ſublime, ſome eternal principle which Mortals in vain reſiſt.

FINIS.